



Compulsory School Age and Drop-outs

October, 2012

Member school districts of the Illinois Association of School Boards strive to meet the needs of all students. Historically IASB members have sought solutions to the challenges they face in providing meaningful, successful programming to students with a myriad of educational needs. Most recently the growing issue of how to increase student retention to avoid teenagers dropping out of school resulted in the adoption of a modified IASB Position Statement.

IASB Position on Student Retention and High School Completion

The Illinois Association of School Boards shall urge Congress and the Illinois General Assembly to commit the appropriate resources and develop programs that would reduce the dropout rate throughout the state of Illinois with specific emphasis on early intervention in the elementary level and continuous intervention at the secondary school level to facilitate graduation.

(Adopted 1986; Amended 2003)

In 2003 IASB adopted a modification to Position Statement 1.04 (as printed above) as a direct result of a movement in Rock Island County to increase the compulsory school age from 16-18. After thorough review of the issue, IASB members concluded that:

- additional costs are incurred by the school district in keeping these students in school
- mandatory school attendance for 17 & 18 year olds can create a hostile educational environment affecting all students
- mandatory student attendance and the accompanying sanctions will increase costs to those agencies outside the school, i.e. local law enforcement, regional offices of education
- raising the compulsory age may create yet one more obstacle for struggling 16-18 year old students who will now incur a criminal penalty (truancy) as a result of not attending school. Some dropouts make that choice to support children or families. Non-compliance with the increased compulsory age would make them criminals.
- this could create unique societal challenges from an older population of truants
- this could impact the safety of students and teachers by increasing the quantity and age, of students that are defiant and distractive in the classroom
- raising the age in and of itself does not solve the problem as schools, law enforcement agencies, and regional offices of education do not have the resources to address truant students under current compulsory age law. Increasing the age will provide no resolution to these challenges.

IASB members suggested that other incentives may be more successful, such as:

- increase opportunities for “alternative education”
- provide expanded programming for students to obtain their diploma
- focus on early interventions to keep students in school

IASB has significant concerns about simply increasing the compulsory school attendance age without providing the additional supporting resources for students, including alternative educational programs, non-traditional study courses, tutoring, etc. Likewise, the additional financial strain on other supporting agencies must be addressed as well, such as local law enforcement agencies and others involved in truancy prevention and enforcement.